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those of Dr. Schlegel's; the birds are, however, referred to four genera, instead of one, and for this, excellent reason appears. We would only remark in the matter of synonymy, that *Aptenodytes* "*Pennantii* GRAY" is antedated by "*longirostris* SCOPOLI," while "*papua* FORST." should be cancelled, on the score of being geographically inept, in favor of "*taeniata* PEALE." Our own slight connection with the paper, in the shape of some osteological memoranda, must of course not stand in the way of our according the high praise that Prof. Hyatt's work merits. — E. C.

DESCRIPTION OF A SPECIMEN OF *BALÆNOPTERA MUSCULUS*.* — As is well known, no mammals more rarely fall under the observation of naturalists than the larger Cetacea; and hence the detailed and careful description and illustration by figures, of the skeleton of even a common species, is a valuable contribution to science. As a group, the Cetacea apparently present a remarkable range of individual variation, in consequence of which both species and genera have been unduly multiplied, a large number of supposed species being at present known only from single and often imperfect specimens, and in some cases merely from a few disconnected bones. Those who have had an opportunity of studying the largest number of specimens appear generally disposed to favor a considerable reduction of the number of described species. In the present memoir, Dr. Dwight has given a detailed and very satisfactory description of the osteology of apparently our most common species of finback whale, which he believes to be identical with the *Balænoptera musculus* of Van Beneden and the older authors, or the *Physalus antiquorum* of Dr. J. E. Gray.

"The task undertaken," the author observes, "is to add one to the list of thoroughly described skeletons, and to endeavor to show that the range of purely individual variations is greater than is generally admitted." In addition to the description of each bone, and generally a comparison of it with the published descriptions and figures of other specimens, he has added an interesting table, showing the comparative breadth of the skull and beak of eleven described specimens, which indicates that while the Society's specimen scarcely differs from the average, the range of

* Description of the Whale (*Balænoptera musculus* Auct.) in the possession of the Society; with remarks on the classification of Fin Whales. By Thomas Dwight, jr., M.D. Mem. Bost. Soc. Nat. Hist., Vol. II, pp. 203-230. 11 woodcuts and 2 plates. June, 1872. (Read May 17, 1871.)

variation, in the proportion of the elements mentioned, amounts to nearly twenty per cent. of the average. "In some cases," Dr. Dwight observes, "both skull and beak exceed the average breadth; in others both fall short of it, and again, in others sometimes one part, and sometimes the other is out of proportion." From the general consideration of the subject, Dr. Dwight seems to favor the opinion that the so-called *Physalus Duguidii* is hardly distinguishable from the present species. He further remarks:

"When the large number of points in which this whale is peculiar is considered, it can not be denied that bolder feats in classification have been attempted than would be requisite to found a new species on this specimen. Such a course, however, would be quite unjustifiable. It is to be particularly noticed that these variations do not point in any one direction; that if in certain aspects this specimen approaches a certain other, yet in others equally important, it may resemble a third which is quite unlike the second, and in still other respects be different from both. A slight study of the writings of the eminent observers so often quoted will be sufficient to show that the same is true, to a greater or less extent, of perhaps every well described specimen of the species." (p. 229.)

Besides the woodcuts illustrative of many of the bones, a large lithographic plate is devoted to figures of the skull and other important osteological features, and in another plate are given dorsal, ventral and profile views of the animal, accurately drawn soon after its capture by Mr. J. H. Blake, of the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, and also a table of external measurements. —J. A. A.

THE HABITS OF THE ORCA.* — It is not often that we find in popular magazines of the day, articles on natural history subjects containing original matter of a character that commends them to the attention of naturalists. But in this very readable paper of five pages, Captain Scammon has given us valuable information respecting the habits, distribution and external characters of a little known group of marine mammals, — the Orcas, or the carnivorous Cetacea, of the Pacific Coast of North America, — based on many years of personal observation. The apparently fabulous

* The Orca. By Capt. C. M. Scammon. Overland Monthly, July, 1872, pp. 52-57, with three outline figures.